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The writer is not rash enough to attempt to define the constituent properties of an art when its own most distinguished followers confess their inability to do so. Possibly, however, this statement of difficulties and diverse opinions may incite thought, and induce some one to grasp and explain the elusive qualities and gifts necessary to the success of the actor.

JULIAN MAGNUS.

III.

IF!

A NEWSPAPER writer, speaking of the late Thomas J. Potter, who, as general manager of the Union Pacific Railway, received an annual salary of \$40,000, says that he began his career twenty-five years ago as a lineman on an Iowa railway at \$45 per month. "He worked his way up," it is added, from the latter position to the former, "and there is not a young man on any railroad in the United States for whom the same result is not possible, if he should put into his work the same amount of brains and zeal which Mr. Potter did." How inspiring! What a trumpet-call to young railway employees to become, one and all, presidents of great lines, and the recipients of yearly salaries each one of which is in itself a fortune! "*If*" he should put into his work," etc. No doubt; and "*if*" my aunt had been a man, she would have been my uncle." It is just and only that provoking "*if*," reader, that prevents a beggar from becoming a Rothschild, or you and me from rivalling Webster at the bar, Gladstone in the senate, or Scott and Dickens in fiction. "*If*" is a very small word,—a monosyllable of two letters only,—yet how immense is that "*If*"! Thousands of persons who now languish in obscurity would astonish the world, were they not, like Mirabeau in his youth, confined in the castle of If.

"If I but had an opening," sighs many a young man in these days of overcrowded professions and multiplying competitors for office and place, "the world should see what I can do." "If I but had an opening!"—as if the very seal and sign of ability—the essential difference between it, or genius, and dilettantism—were not a regal superiority to the "openings" and "opportunities" which so many aspirants to wealth or honor make a condition of success. The successful man is the one who *made* a way when he could not find one; who made the adverse circumstances, over which others were moaning, the ministers and aids to his advancement, instead of becoming their slave. The difficulties which disheartened them only stiffened his sinews; the block of granite which was an obstacle in their pathway became a stepping-stone in his. A lad of twelve years of age, who already played the piano very skilfully, once said to Mozart: "Herr Kapellmeister, I should very much like to compose something. How am I to begin?" "Pho, pho," said Mozart, "you must wait." "But you," said the boy, "composed much earlier." "Yes," replied Mozart, "but *I asked nothing about it*. If one has the spirit of a composer, *one writes because he cannot help it*." On another occasion, writing in reply to a friend who had asked about his way of composing music, he names certain occasions when his ideas flow best and most abundantly, and adds: "*Whence and how they come I know not, nor can I force them. . . . Why productions take from my hand that particular form and style which makes them Mozartish, and different from the works of other composers, is probably owing to the same cause which renders my nose so and so, large or aquiline, or, in short, makes it Mozart's and different from those of other people, for I really do not study to aim at any originality.*"

The letters of Dickens show that it was in a similar way that he wrote those wondrous novels of his that enchant the world. When a new creation was about to rise from the ocean-depths of thought, he did not go about asking advice, or gird up his literary energies by a prodigious effort of the will, but, to use his own language about "The Chimes," "all his affections and passions got twined and knotted upon it"; he went wandering about at night into the strangest places, "possessed," spirit-driven, a prophet commissioned to utter the life-giving word to men's souls, and finding no rest until he uttered it. So, though rarely perhaps in the same degree, with the eminent men, the great leaders, in almost every calling; they chose

their respective pursuits, if they can be said to have chosen them, not because those pursuits promised the most money, fame, or happiness, but unconsciously, because they could not help it; and they succeeded, not because they resolved with an intense, continuous act of volition to do such and such things, but because they were impelled by a great, prevailing, paramount desire, which engulfed all lesser desires, to do them. No doubt there is a will that makes the man; but if it is not inborn, it cannot be put into him, and it needs no prompting. To tell a young man that he can become a millionaire, a railroad king, etc., etc., "*if* he will put into his work the same amount of brains and zeal" as A or B did before *he* became a millionaire or railroad king, is the veriest drivel. It is equivalent to saying that he will become a Samson if he will only put forth a Samson's strength, or that if an astronomical student will put into his work the mental energy, the spiritual force, of Newton, he will do as great things as Newton—which is not a very stimulating statement, if it be true. How strangely men persist in regarding moral qualities as habits merely, and not gifts! The will is a natural endowment as well as the mental faculties, and to want it is as bad as to want mental power.

WILLIAM MATHEWS.

IV.

THE SLAYER OF J. WILKES BOOTH.

THE WRITER had a personal acquaintance with Boston Corbett, who avenged the death of President Lincoln in so tragic a manner on the night of April 26, 1865.

During the year 1875, while attending a Soldiers' Reunion of Blue and Gray, at Caldwell, Ohio, I first met Mr. Corbett. The town was small and an immense crowd had gathered, General Sherman, among others, being present. Corbett and I were assigned to the same room for the night. I found him a nervous, excitable man, always the centre of attraction, with a keen, but wild, look in his eyes, and an interminable restlessness of body and limb. He was then a preacher, regularly ordained, I think. He led a prayer-meeting in the village church while there. He was always well armed, in self-defence, as he explained, and his experience while at Caldwell showed that he had some reason to fear violence. He got into an exciting argument with several men one afternoon over the question as to whether Booth had really been killed at all. Hot words ensued, a rush was made towards Corbett, and in an instant the gleaming barrel of his revolver flashed in the faces of his opponents. It was with considerable difficulty that they were separated and peace restored.

Corbett claimed to those of us whom he considered his friends that he had been hounded for years by men who were high in authority at Washington at the time of the assassination, and that they caused him to lose several important positions after he went into civil life, and had refused to shake hands with him or to answer his salutation on the streets. The only reason he assigned for this was that his bullet had deprived the Washington authorities of an opportunity to make a grand display in the execution of Booth.

Be this as it may, it is certain that Corbett was always on the watch for bodily harm from some source. During the night I shared a bed with him this was exemplified. It was a close, hot night. We slept on the ground floor, with the window raised. Corbett walked the floor for ten minutes after I was in bed. He would frequently clasp his hands and exclaim: "The Lord have mercy on my soul!" At last he knelt down and offered a fervent prayer, after which he placed a large revolver under his pillow and went to bed. He then told me the whole history of that dark night in Virginia. He said no words could express the resigned hatred, and yet heroic look, of Booth's face as it was lighted up by the flames of the tobacco barn, in which he had taken refuge from his pursuers. To the call for surrender, Booth hurled back words of scorn and defiance, and turned his back on the troops in derision. Corbett said he could stand it no longer, and, although the orders were to take Booth alive, if possible, he raised his revolver and fired. The wound in Booth's head was said to have been within half an inch of the location of Lincoln's fatal wound.